

Remarks

The Applicants have amended Claims 12 and 13 to recite that the amount of (C + N) in the austenite phase is in a range of 0.38 to about 2% by mass and 0.36 to about 2%, respectively. Support may be found within the originally claimed range of about 0.16 to about 2%. Further support may also be found on page 52 of the Applicants' specification in Table 2, Steel Nos. 3 and 31.

Claims 14 and 15 have been similarly amended except that the range is from 0.38 to about 2%.

Claim 20 has been cancelled in view of the changes to Claims 12-15.

Entry of the above amendments and cancellation into the official file is respectfully requested.

Claims 12, 16 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over the combination of Durand-Charre with Espy. The Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's detailed comments applying the combination against those claims. The Applicants nonetheless respectfully submit that even if one skilled in the art were to make the combination as recited in the rejection, the resulting steels would still be different from the steels recited in Claims 12 and 16 (Claim 20 having been cancelled). Details follow.

The rejection frankly acknowledges that Espy does not disclose that C and N reside in the austenitic phase. The Applicants agree. It therefore inherently follows that Espy fails to disclose the Applicants' claimed amounts of C and N in the austenitic phase. The rejection nonetheless turns to Durand-Charre for the teachings that C and N stabilize austenite. However, there is no disclosure in Durand-Charre that would provide an indication as to the amount of C and N that would be present in the austenite phase of the Espy steels. Thus, the rejection must fail on this basis alone.

The Applicants therefore respectfully submit that even if one skilled in the art were to combine Durand-Charre with Espy as set forth in the rejection, the resulting steels would still be different from the subject matter of Claims 12 and 16. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 14, 16, 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over the combination of Maehara with Espy. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that even if one skilled in the

art were to combine Maehara with Espy as recited in the rejection, the resulting steels would still be quite different. Details follow.

The rejection frankly acknowledges that Espy does not disclose the inclusion of vanadium. The Applicants agree. Thus, the rejection turns to Maehara to cure that deficiency.

However, Maehara is inadequate and does not make up for the Espy deficiency. Thus, the Applicants respectfully submit that even if one skilled in the art were to combine Maehara with Espy as recited in the rejection, the resulting steels would still be quite different from those as recited in Claims 14, 16, 18 and 19. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over the further combination of Durand-Charre with Maehara and Espy. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that the rejection is moot in view of the cancellation of Claim 20. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 12-15, 16 and 18-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Maehara. The Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection is now moot with respect to cancelled Claim 20. The Applicants also respectfully submit that Maehara fails to disclose, teach or suggest the subject matter of Claims 12-15, 16 and 18-19. Details follow.

The rejection frankly acknowledges that Maehara does not disclose that the stainless steel is deep drawable, punch-stretchable, crevice and weld part corrosion resistant, and resistant to corrosion at intergranular interfaces. The Applicants agree. The rejection also acknowledges that Maehara does not disclose the Applicants' claimed equation. Nonetheless, all of those features are said to be inherent. However, that is just speculative. Withdrawal of the rejection is accordingly respectfully requested.

Claims 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over Alfonsson. The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Alfonsson fails to disclose, teach or suggest the subject matter of those two claims.

There is no motivation provided by Alfonsson for those skilled in the art to modify the amounts of C and N in Alfonsson in a way that would have a reasonable expectation of success. As a result, the Applicants respectfully submit that Alfonsson is inapplicable.

Claims 12, 16, 17 and 18-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 over the combination of Durand-Charre with Alfonsson. The Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection is moot

with respect to cancelled Claim 20. The Applicants nonetheless respectfully submit that the combination is inapplicable against remaining Claims 12, 16, 18 and 19.

The Applicants have already established that Alfonsson is inapplicable to Claims 14 and 15. The Applicants respectfully submit that adding the teachings of Durand-Charre provide disclosure that C and N stabilize austenite and are not easily soluble in ferritic stainless steels. However, this does nothing to provide disclosure, teachings or suggestions as to the importance of the amount of C and N in the austenite phase or what those amounts might be. In any event, if the maximum amount of C and N present in the Alfonsson steels (and not necessarily in the austenite phase of those steels) is taken as 0.37, that maximum amount still falls well outside the Applicants' claimed range of 0.38 to about 2% as recited in Claim 12. The Applicants therefore respectfully submit that the combination is inapplicable to all of Claims 12, 16, 18 and 19. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In light of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that the entire application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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